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Liberals' amendments spurned

House panel OKs spy-disclosure fines

From Wire Services

Washington—The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee yesterday approved a bill that would make it a crime to reveal the identity of U.S. undercover intelligence agents.

The 21-8 vote to send the measure to the full House for action followed the rejection of amendments aimed at weakening provisions liberal Democrats said would impose unconstitutional restrictions on journalists.

Supporters of the measure said the amendments would have made the bill worthless.

Backers of the bill are hoping for a prompt vote on the House floor with Congress planning to recess October 3. A similar bill already has been passed by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The bill is aimed largely at suppressing

such publications as the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, an anti-Central Intelligence Agency journal printed in the United States, which regularly discloses the names of CIA officers abroad.

It was given impetus by a July 4 machine-gun attack on the home of a CIA station chief in Jamaica after his name had been disclosed by a *Covert Action* editor.

Today's vote reflected widespread fear in Congress that the intelligence community has been weakened by restrictions and attacks on it and needs protection to do its job.

Supporters of the measure cited "a clear and present danger" to U.S. intelligence agents abroad that had to be met.

Under the bill, anyone who "with the intent to impair or impede the foreign intelligence activities of the United States" identifies a U.S. covert agent could be sentenced to up to three years in prison and fined \$15,000.

Disclosure of an agent's identity by current or former government employees with legitimate access to classified data could result in a 10-year sentence and a \$50,000 fine.

Before voting on the measure, the committee rejected a subcommittee's substitute bill that would have restricted penalties to past or present government employees.

The panel then defeated an amendment that would have removed criminal penalties for publication of information on agents' identities that was already in the public domain.

Proponents of the amendment said if a journalist obtained secret information from a public library, it would be the CIA's fault for allowing it to get there.

Finally, the committee defeated an amendment that would have removed from the bill protection for covert FBI agents within the United States.